2587

No. 189.

DANCING

AS A

CHRISTIAN AMUSEMENT.

BY THE

REV. GEORGE C. HECKMAN, D.D.,

PRESIDENT OF HANOVER COLLEGE.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

1334 CHESTNUT STREET.

DANCING

AS A

CHRISTIAN AMUSEMENT.

BY THE
REV. GEORGE C. HECKMAN, D.D.,
PRESIDENT OF HANOVER COLLEGE.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
COPYRIGHT
No. 2887 1C
1879

PHILADELPHIA:
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
1334 CHESTNUT STREET.

[1879.]

GV1741
.H44

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1879, by
THE TRUSTEES OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

WESTCOTT & THOMSON,
Stereotypers and Electrotypers, Philada.

No. 189.

DANCING.

THE scriptural titles of a minister of Jesus Christ are suggestive. Among them are "watchman," "shepherd" and "bishop." The particular charge which the pastor is to *watch, to feed* and *to oversee* is "the Church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." When any social amusement, fashionable custom, secular business or heretical propagandism threatens the Church with injury and society with demoralization, it is the right and duty of the Christian pulpit or church-court to use all proper meaus in a proper spirit to confront, expose and resist the threatening danger. This should be done in a kind, gentle, respectful manner, not in an arrogant, ascetic, self-righteous spirit.

The amusement under discussion is sustained by the opinion and practice of the fashionable world, and sometimes, too, by members of the Church. I deem it at least questionable, as a barrier to the progress of

Christian society, as unfriendly to virtue and grace, and as a leaven of individual and social corruption. Can this conviction be sustained? The recreation is seeking recognition and encouragement in families and churches where once it was utterly excluded. Is this a necessary consequence of our growth in wealth and evangelical liberality? This fact, and the recent and continuous deliverances of every grade of church-courts, make it a timely theme for our consideration.

Let us first consider and answer some of the most plausible defences of dancing.

1. Honest appeal has been made to the authority of Scripture in favor of this amusement. It has been found in such a passage as this, "There is a time to dance," and in the example of such worthies as Miriam and David. A reliable writer, whose criticism my personal examination sustains, says: "I have consulted every passage in the Bible which speaks of dancing, from all which it appears —1. That dancing was a religious act, both in true and also in idol-worship. 2. That it was practiced exclusively on joyful occasions, such as national festivals or great vic-

tories. 3. That it was performed on such great occasions by one only of the sexes. 4. That it was performed usually in the day-time in the open air—in the highways, fields and groves. 5. That men who perverted dancing from a sacred use to purposes of amusement were deemed infamous. 6. That no instances of dancing are found upon record in the Bible in which the two sexes united in the exercise either as an act of worship or amusement. 7. That there are no instances on record in the Bible of social dancing for amusement, except that of the 'vain fellows' void of shame alluded to by Michal, of the irreligious families described by Job, which produced increased impiety and ended in destruction, and of Herodias' daughter, which terminated in the rash vow of Herod and the murder of John the Baptist." The sum of this biblical testimony is that the dancing approved was in every respect very different from the modern amusement bearing the name, that it was performed on great national and religious occasions by the sexes *separately* as a *spiritual* exercise, that its perversion to amusement was regarded as a sac-

rilege, and that in every case where it is mentioned as a *social amusement* it is associated with condemnation or circumstances of horror. Pastors will find the study of these passages repaid by a full, interesting and instructive line of argument different from that which follows in this essay.

2. It is urged that dancing is a healthful exercise. I shall deny this of fashionable dancing. But even if it were admitted, would it be a sufficient justification of a practice which many weighty objections make at least of questionable propriety? "Bodily exercise" (ascetic or otherwise) "profiteth a little," but that little would be sadly purchased by the price of "godliness, which is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The pursuit of physical health by many innocent and delightful ways accessible to all needs not the addition of an exercise seriously objectionable on moral and religious grounds.

3. It is said that dancing promotes graceful movement and polite manners. These are attainments which we ought to seek, for they

are important elements of personal attraction and usefulness, alike desirable in society and in the Church. They should be taught and sought by all means that do not entail consequences dangerous to health, beauty and purity. It is admitted that instruction and practice in dancing do contribute to ease and grace of movement, but, as shall be seen, at the risk of bodily, mental and moral injury. Early instruction, judicious labor and regular outdoor exercise, as in play, walking, riding and gymnastics, will produce far greater ease and dignity, strength and grace of movement. This is proven by innumerable instances all around us of persons who never set foot in the dance, and thus were never exposed to the wanton freedom of attitude and manner so commonly inculcated in the dancing-school and encouraged in the ball-room. It is fair to remark here that some calisthenic exercises in our mixed schools are open to the objections which lie against promiscuous dancing.

4. In favor of dancing is urged that it is fashionable. True, and many would not dance or allow dancing if it were not fashionable; they yield to the fashion with a secret protest

of their moral sense. Many other enormous evils which burden society are fashionable. Fashion is often a most dangerous enemy to grace. It has lured unnumbered souls to ruin, and its testimony in favor of any practice should at once awaken suspicion. Yet fashion has its legitimate place and is entitled to a large share of respect; but when it approves and advocates any custom or amusement objectionable on physical or moral grounds, it should be rejected by all, especially by those who are "not to be conformed to the world."

5. It is said that dancing is not sinful in itself. Just so, but then the plea implies that it may be sinful. This plea should always awaken close inquiry as to the propriety of any recreation in defence of which it is employed, although it is often lawfully and unanswerably used. Its admission will not weaken our position if the real, not the ideal, dance of modern fashionable society is proven sinful and improper. The plea is made mainly to justify family and non-promiscuous dancing. What are we to understand by non-promiscuous dancing? Is it dancing by one sex

alone, or only by members of the family or kindred or neighbors? Or does it include all of a given social circle and the strangers who may be introduced by them? And may any lady or gentleman exclude any other one who, though belonging to the family or social circle, ought for good reasons be excluded from the familiarities of the dance? How difficult to define non-promiscuous dancing! How hard to get up dancing-parties that are not promiscuous! How can you restrict dancing to select company? How can you restrain within prescribed bounds the passion you have educated? In this, too, we perceive the subtlety of Satan, and that "the beginning of sin is like the letting out of water." Indulge your children in the occasional and abstemious use of intoxicating drinks at the family board or evening-party, and you create an appetite that may be satisfied only with the indulgence of the bar and the inebriate. Gather them round the card-table, and you invite them to the doors and experience of the gambling-saloon. Provide private theatricals, and you may arouse an appetite which will seek gratification amid the corrupt surroundings and im-

pure teachings of the public drama. Private dancing supplies the ball-room as does the nursery the orchard or the school the college. It is urged that liability to perversion or excess cannot be conclusive against a practice or indulgence, as in the case of eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like. Admitted, but these are necessities of nature, duties of life, in the use or non-use of which we have no choice, and it is denied that they are necessarily or generally liable to abuse; whereas dancing is not a necessity of nature or duty of life, and is generally productive of some form and measure of bodily, mental and moral injury. Besides, so long as family and square dances are vindicated, you protest almost in vain again the ball-room and round dances. But the objections I shall urge against dancing as it is apply to it as an amusement under any and all circumstances.

6. It has been argued that dancing is not expressly forbidden in the Bible. I think that is true; and yet even if it be true, of what force is the argument? Must we have an express declaration of the Bible to know the moral nature and lawfulness of every ac-

tion, sentiment or custom? Have we any such declaration as to the slave-trade or arson or gambling or the theatre or obscene literature? And yet what mind enlightened by Scripture can hesitate to believe that these things are as forcibly forbidden by the spirit and implications of the Bible as they could be by direct declaration? Now, if dancing is hostile to the spirit of the Bible and to that life which the Bible enjoins, then it is forbidden by the Bible.

7. It is charged in palliation of dancing that those who object to it amuse themselves in ways as objectionable, or more so. This is assertion, not argument, but it is so often made that with many it has the force of argument. But the intelligent and really pious people who object to dancing are not given to those kinds of amusement. Besides, the choice is not left us which of objectionable amusements we shall select: all are alike forbidden. Rather than apologize for the dancing of some by the card-playing, or even the evil gossip, of others, it would be safer to suspect that the entire atmosphere of such society was tainted. Must the alterna-

tive be dancing or gossip? Are these the boundaries of rational and moral capacities in the matter of social recreation? I pity the individual or company whose culture is so limited. Besides, on reflection, I am persuaded that gossip is less dangerous than dancing, and I think it can be shown that dancers have not a monopoly of intelligent and virtuous conversation. It must be imbecile society indeed that cannot find pastimes at once pleasant, proper and profitable.

8. Lastly, with a painful insensibility to parental obligation, it has been pressed apologetically for dancing that "young people will be amused, and if you restrain them in one thing they will indulge in another." Now, to the first point I reply that we want young people, and old too, to be amused; whilst the second I deny, and assert that the young, restrained in wrong-doing, are apt to keep from wrong-doing, and those indulged in one wrong thing will indulge in other wrong things. In fact, the assertion is a devil's blow at all parental restraint and responsibility. It contradicts God and affronts his government of manhood. To admit it either as a principle of

action or an excuse for neglect is to remove all restraint upon or in anything and everything. It is a parent's duty to forbid all improper associations and practices; and if, in spite of parental fidelity, a child succeeds in the gratification of evil propensities, then the guilt rests upon the child, and the blood of betrayed trust will not fall upon the parent.

Another sophistry of parental indolence and devilish malignity is, "Let a child learn the evil for itself." Then grant it the largest license, indulgence in everything! But no. Experience of evil is not necessary to the knowledge of evil, nor does such experience, as does the want of it, swell the sum of our moral force; nor does the experience of evil, as does the gracious absence of it, intensify abhorrence and rejection of evil. Nor is it necessary that the experience of moral evil, any more than of physical evil, should be individual and universal in order to the prevention or cure of evil, general or particular. Parental knowledge, whether earned by experience or observation, should be employed for the protection of the child, and, as to dancing, is as valuable and should wield as strong au-

thority as in anything else as injurious. Let your children suffer by your example or culpable neglect, and they will thank you in neither time nor eternity, nor will you escape the displeasure of the almighty Father of the children.

I have made an honest endeavor to cover the ground generally and plausibly occupied in favor of dancing as a social amusement. If any point in its favor has been omitted, it is because I am ignorant of it, and not from any desire to avoid it. Nor do I desire to diminish, but to increase, lawful amusements. I myself like to be amused, and I am easily amused. The man who invents an innocent amusement, or who, without vulgarity or impurity, makes mankind laugh, is a public benefactor, as well as the man who makes two blades of grass grow where but one could grow before. We owe a large debt to our pure humorists. If I were a heathen like Socrates, I would, for sanitary reasons, offer a cock to Æsculapius for every one of them; but as I am not a heathen, nor a Socrates either, I thank God for them. But I cannot commend or encourage an amusement which constantly

needs to be defended, and by defences so weak, against the large majority of the best people of all religious sects, and against the judgment of so many of the best and wisest people of the world.

It already appears that social dancing is at least a very questionable amusement, and that ought to be enough—it is enough—for serious Christians or thoughtful parents. It also appears that the defences of social dancing are really weak, and must yield to the pressure of substantial objections. To such I now address myself. I ask permission to press upon your candid consideration some reasons why, as a father, a Christian and a minister, I must enter my protest against this social amusement. I will try to do this kindly, truthfully, and with an earnestness that yet deprecates resentment, for I cannot afford to lose, nor can any man afford to lose, friendships, except in the path of duty.

I. Effect of Dancing on Bodily Health.

As this presents perhaps the strongest and most plausible defence of this amusement, it

may seem hazardous to assail it, and safer, in the strength of other objections, to let this point pass. Yet I must unhesitatingly declare dancing in its most popular forms an eminently dangerous exercise. We must take the custom, not under conceived conditions, but as we find it in ordinary social practice. With much assurance and poetry we are frequently referred to the healthful dancing of European peasantry as illustrative of its beneficial effect upon bodily health and grace. Yet certain areas of Europe and European society are not the best sources from which to import customs and amusements for American youth and the Christian home. If we do, we must also take their morals, for the manners and morals of a people are inseparable. The peasant-dances of sunny France and Spain and Italy are performed upon the green sward and under the pure, exhilarating atmosphere of heaven, while the moralities of that peasantry are never recommended for adoption in the homes of this land.

With us the dance is generally performed on dusty carpets and floors, in heated, confined, often crowded rooms, whose atmosphere

is poisoned by the rapid, increased respiration of the company. The movement is unnatural, violent, especially for women, producing unhealthful nervous excitement, quick inhalation of impure air surcharged with the dust of the floor and fine loosened particles of carpets. The body becomes heated to that degree that the temptation to seek a colder atmosphere is seldom resisted, while frequently such exposure from open doors and windows is unavoidable. The hours of dancing are generally those which Nature and science declare unfitted for exercise, permitting only gentle exertion and soon calling for entire repose.

The physical effects of dancing, then, are great bodily debility, undue excitement and reactive prostration of the nervous system, poisoning and obstruction of the lungs and throat, often resulting in hemorrhages and consumption, palpitation and other diseases of the heart, frequent headaches, with their train of evils, and internal injuries of various kinds. This is a strong indictment of dancing, but I am sure it is not exaggerated. Within six months of the writing of this tract, I be-

came cognizant of six cases of sudden death by dancing. In addition to these, while preaching on this subject recently at Hanover, a funeral-procession passed the church, following the remains of a young woman who died of rapid disease caused by dancing. Could the truth be ascertained, I doubt not we all would be startled by the amount of sickness, infirmity and death which would find its chief or only source in this popular social amusement. Should any one reply, "Confine dancing to a gentle bodily movement, remove it to the open lawn or bare floor, and limit it to a brief time," I answer, "You conceive a mode of dancing seldom or never found in social life, which lovers of this pleasure would ridicule and refuse, and which, therefore, I am not called upon to discuss now. I am now to consider dancing, not as a calisthenic exercise or pastime for children under possible regulations, but as a social amusement, as it actually exists in present society, with its usual circumstances and prevailing tendencies."

II. Moral or Religious Considerations involved in this Amusement.

Of course these are the most serious, and require intelligent, prayerful and honest discussion, for we wish to determine our proper attitude as Christians to this custom.

1. *Its Criminal Waste of Time and Money.* —This commences with the dancing-school, and terminates only with the close of fashionable life. I do not object to spending time and money for amusement—it is a happy necessity of our nature, and, in proper indulgence, may demand its share of expenditure—but the time and money consumed on the dancing-school I deem extravagant and criminal, because, if bodily health and grace are the objects, that expenditure is unnecessary, since these results can be better secured by easier means, in better places, without physical and moral exposure. In these schools the young acquire a taste for this amusement which parental pride and the weak ambition to be esteemed fashionable are not slack to gratify. A vanity is aroused and cultivated which imperiously craves indulgence. Times

and places are set apart for dancing. Clubs are formed; and when parents have retired, young people of both sexes prolong the dance into the "wee sma' hours," or under the silent darkness find their way home. As the ball-room and assembly, of all places, are those selected for the exhibition of personal charms and rich attire, much time and money as well as thought and feeling is expended in prolonged preparation and upon costly dress and ornament. The love of admiration and display is innate; and once fairly aroused and stimulated by envy and jealous rivalry, it is never satisfied, being alike insensible to the wreck of fortune, the ruin of souls and the unrelieved suffering of the poor.

2. *The Evil Associations of Dancing.*—These commence in the dancing-school. Society looks with contempt upon the employment of a dancing-master. All think they know his social position and character. As a class, dancing-masters are excluded from the intimacies of refined society—are indolent, dissolute and bankrupt in fortune or morals. Possibly this opinion does injustice to some exceptional cases. I pity them, but I cannot

alter this popular verdict. Yet to such teachers, invariably of marked inferiority of some kind, in the privacy and familiarity of the dancing-school, fashionable or would-be fashionable parents commit what they strive to think is only the physical training of sons and daughters, of whose bodies and souls they must render account at God's awful assize. In these schools children encounter companions of various social culture and position as classmates and partners in the dance. Though out of school-hours this acquaintance may be ignored, the dangerous moral impressions of this brief intimacy by touch, look or word may never be effaced. But generally the school-acquaintance is not ignored. It has involved many families in unhappiness and dishonor—enough, at least, to warn those parents who are apt to forget that they are appointed to select the companions of their children.

These evil associations are attendant on the whole life of the dancer. Women must take such partners as the accident of the dance brings them, even though it throws them into the hands and arms or under the gloat-

ing, sensual gaze of the dissipated and licentious; for Fashion—child of Sin and Death—will embrace incarnate corruption, though reeking with the filth of bar-room, theatre or brothel, if only it comes with gold and gay attire or respectable social connections. The rules of this social amusement will allow a man guilty of every crime which should make women loathe him and banish him from all respectable company to take liberties with the person of wife and sister and daughter which under no other circumstances than marriage would be permitted to the man of purest morals or closest friendship.

Nor ought we lose sight of those too frequent adjuncts to the dancing-party—viz., wine, cards, immodest dress and the masquerade, with their demoralizing consequences. Some may say I am confounding things essentially distinct—that these evils are not necessary to dancing. Once more you compel me to reply that we must take things as they are; and I ask, Are not these evils generally as inevitable upon dancing as are others upon horse-racing, wine-drinking, card-playing and theatre-going? We must not only resolve things

into their essential elements, but also regard them in their affinities, attractions and tendencies.

3. *The Injurious Effects of Dancing upon Mind and Heart.*—Few passions take a stronger hold or exercise a more imperious sway. This amusement awakens and indulges some of the worst propensities of the unrenewed nature, and interferes with intellectual and moral improvement. It appeals to vanity by the opportunity it affords for the display of costly dress and personal charms; and this with such force as to induce immodest exposure, risk of health, waste of time and cruel extravagance, a hardened selfishness deaf to the rights and feelings of others, to the appeals of suffering and to the duties of benevolence. It cultivates pride in personal beauty and grace, fashionable appearance and triumph over others, or else envy dark and mean at the superior accomplishments, impressions and success of others.

But the most objectionable feature of this amusement is its tendency to sensuality. The movements, attitudes and exposures of the body, the nervous, passionate excitement,

and the undue license allowed, awaken impure thoughts and feelings in which the filthy and passionate revel, and which hold the pure with a fascination the nature of which they never analyze but to blush. Very few escape this dangerous state of feeling. Hence the impure are always eager for the dance. Hence dancing is one of the propelling forces which plunge men and women down to profligacy, ruin and death; while many others who escape these lower depths of the pit in secrecy of mind and heart learn to revel in forbidden thoughts and scenes. Some lovely and virtuous, and others cold and passionless, may mingle without such injury in the voluptuous mazes of the dance, but oh how painful to see loveliness and innocence in such fellowship with most hideous vice, breathing this tainted air and embracing pleasure along these precipices of moral death!

Those who have any considerable experience or observation know that these statements are substantially right, whether or not they have candor to make the admission. By the gentle, patient, firm restraints and instruction of parental piety I have been pre-

served from the indulgence of this amusement, for which my manhood and maturer judgment give a devout mother sincere and loving gratitude. Though without personal experience, I am sure these statements are right. I judge from personal observation, from frequent remarks and comments on the dance, and from a long array of facts. I know it from confessions made to me. I believe it from my knowledge of our poor, passionate nature, ever sensitive to temptation in this direction. I infer it from my knowledge of those who love the dance as they love nothing that does not minister to sensuality. I know it from remarks made and eyes feeding upon the forms of those in the dance whom we would never have looked upon but with purity, respect and honor. I know it from the dislike we feel in seeing those we love and cherish mingling in the dance with those whose lives or nature we abhor, and from the shrinking which pure men feel on watching wives and daughters in the promiscuous dance. I know it from the reason many have given, and which more could give, for the intense love they have for the dance.

Christian parents and friends, I am conscious of the delicacy of this subject, that I am treading ground that needs cautious steps, that I may be accused of a pharisaic prudery, and that I may be risking friendships which I have no desire to lose. I deprecate your displeasure. But neither for peace nor friendship, nor from false, ill-timed delicacy, can I keep back convictions that have grown upon my mind, not without resistance, which are the growth of much observation and thought and discussion with good and bad, wise and foolish—convictions which the corruptions of fashionable life have long ago provoked and justified. I regard promiscuous dancing as a great moral whirlpool; and when I see any I love within the charmed circle, I dread the shock their moral nature must sustain, the lifelong struggle with forbidden feeling they are calling into activity; I tremble lest some of them by successive steps be drawn down to shame and death. How can we otherwise regard an amusement which finds its eager votaries and conveys its pleasures in the tavern, the gambling-hell, the theatre and the brothel, as well as in the parlor and drawing-room?

How can we otherwise regard an amusement which the passionate and profligate so much love, which furnishes so much food and opportunity to vice, and which leads to so much mental dissipation and physical and moral harm? How can we otherwise regard a custom which proffers to strangers, and invites from them, liberties which should be confined to the nearest relations and domestic privacy?

4. *Dancing is Unfriendly to the Purity and Growth of Religious Life.*—(1.) Dancing leads to neglect of religion. It prevents religious impressions where they do not exist. It is a noticeable fact that a revival of religion which leaves innocent amusements untouched breaks up all dancing-clubs and parties within its sphere, and that revivals rarely occur in those persons and communities where dancing is a prevailing custom. All ministers regard this amusement as more or less hostile to religious conviction and inquiry, and the awakening of a soul hopeless while under its fascination. There is nothing in any of the forms of dancing friendly to the power of truth or to the spirit of holiness, while it is in entire harmony with worldly-mindedness and im-

penitency. Nor is this merely a negative influence. The spirit of the amusement is one of positive hostility to pure religion. When the world desires to secularize the Church or defeat its evangelical purposes, dancing is sure to be prominent and effective among the means employed. Worldly people, alarmed at the religious thoughtfulness or consistency of children or companions, will seek to engage them in the dance, well appreciating its antagonism to a Christian life. In those infidel schemes which deride and denounce the Bible and the present structure of society dancing is introduced because of its hostility to serious reflection, to religious thought and to social purity.

(2.) Dancing is prominent as a worldly amusement. Although the world has often appealed to the support of the Bible and the Church, still it freely admits that this amusement is not religious—has no reference to the approval, worship or honor of God. Nay! On account of its acknowledged frivolity and worldliness, many persons other than religious are properly excluded from it. An eminent writer puts these pertinent and caustic in-

quiries: "Do men admire a physician in the giddy whirl of the voluptuous dance, or a judge in the stream of the silly gallopade, a presbyter exhibiting his prowess in the reel, a bishop sloping his person to the quaint movements of the minuet, or an archbishop laboring at the agilities of a Highland fling? Yea, even character is allowed to have its weight. Literary or scientific men, if they only say, 'I don't usually attend such amusements,' or 'I never dance,' are at once excused." I might multiply similar opinions of distinguished laymen from Cicero to Daniel Webster. The world does not expect or approve of such characters in the dance; and if it ever does induce them to enter the charmed circle, it regards them with a loss of respect and reverence which largely detracts from their professional standing and usefulness. On the other hand, in heart it respects that official dignity or consistent piety which refuses to participate in this amusement. If it seeks to entrap the Church, it is only to disarm opposition to a recreation which is not defended because of its moral elements, but simply on the score of its asserted innocence.

(3.) Dancing is opposed to the precepts of the Bible concerning our personal life. It is opposed to that sobriety, dignity and earnestness of life enjoined in such words as "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil;" to that new birth and life expressed thus: "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance;" to that crucifixion to the world enjoined by such counsel as "Be not conformed to the world," "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;" to that elevated life suggested by such words as "Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth," "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world;" to that religious solicitude and diligence inspired by such warnings as "Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it;" to that loving, thoughtful example and influence inculcated by such words as "Avoid even the appearance of evil," "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no more flesh while the world standeth;"

and to such consecration to God as is expressed by these words: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven," "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his." Thus might your memory add Scripture to Scripture, the spirit and scope of each of which would contain an unmistakable sentence against a social amusement as questionable as this.

(4.) The habit of dancing is unfriendly to Christian life and growth. It unfits body, mind and soul for prayer, spiritual thought, communion with God, and other private religious duties. It impairs personal consecration to the love and work of Jesus. Its element of sensualism undermines Christian virtue and chills regenerate emotion. It awakens and nourishes pride, jealousy and others of the worst passions of our nature. It affords food and stimulus to the worst forms of gossip. If any professed Christians deny this, let them compare their present views and feelings about dancing with those they held and felt at conversion or during the revival of religious principles and

activities. In short, to show the completeness of the antagonism between this amusement and the holy religion of Christ, study with candor as well as with charity those churches and professors who excuse, practice and advocate dancing. Are not such churches without marked tokens of the presence of the Holy Spirit, given to external observances, unevangelic in spirit, with a lower standard of personal consecration, undervaluing religious privileges and pleasures, extenuating many other worldly amusements and questionable pursuits, and ready to open the privileges of the sacraments to all who desire them without close scrutiny of their religious principles and experience? Are not those members of the Church who practice this amusement generally weak or ignorant or formal or worldly? Did you ever know one who was prominent for dancing also eminent for piety? Do they not generally avoid and lightly esteem the more pious and earnest of their fellow-Christians, and in their associations, resorts, conversation, reading, amusements and conduct of affairs show more of the spirit of the world than of grace? As a

rule, are they not so liberal in their views and habits and speech, or so silent and undemonstrative as to religion, that strangers would never suspect their profession? There are dancing Christians active in certain departments of church-work and habitually attendant upon religious services, but is their religious life broad and deep enough, or are their numbers great enough, to negative the inquiries above made? I believe the concurrent successive testimonies of the devout children of God are the testimony of the Holy Comforter whom Jesus promised to his disciples to teach and guide them in all things, and the concurrent successive voice of the Church has been emphatically against dancing as an amusement in Christian families and society.

Near the time of the first writing of this paper, a young lady in all the splendor and prodigality of a rich ball-room dress was found in her chamber in the cold embrace of death by those who came to bear her to the ball. About the same time in a Western city another maiden, amid the merry ring of music and giddy maze of the dance, fell dead upon

the floor. Close to the time and place of this writing a young man in the eager, exciting dance from the arms of a beauty fell bleeding to the floor, and was borne away to a bed of sudden death. Why did the silence of the sepulchre come down with dread and guilt upon these gay and happy companies? Why did they hastily separate and fly to their homes as if from the presence of a judgment? Why did the blood chill as the eye fell upon the intelligence widely scattered by the press? Why do you now chill as I feebly repeat these facts? Why do our eyes follow with instinctive fear those young souls in their sudden summons to the bar of God? Tell me why, if the dance be that altogether innocent thing which some would make it out to be. Why is death in the dance, at the card-table, in the theatre or on a Sabbath journey associated with peculiar sadness? A bereaved parent can tell with no shrinking of respect for the departed of the death of a son or daughter in the street, on the thoroughfare, at the table of refreshment, in some happy social circle or on the field of battle, but why this agonized hesitation, this uncon-

trolled grief, these welling sobs and scalding tears, as parental lips tell of the soul of some loved child going from the dance to the tribunal of God?

Dancing, as we know it, is a questionable and dangerous amusement. In such belief it must not receive approval, nor, what would be worse, must it receive connivance. We should meet it at the threshold of our fold and rebuke its presence. If any persist in its practice and encouragement, when they and we stand at the bar of our Lord Jesus Christ they must acquit us of unfaithfulness and bloodguiltiness in this thing. But, Christian brethren, I would not have you indifferent as to this amusement. For the sake of your higher life in Jesus, I entreat you, touch not the unclean thing. By the sorrows of many pious parents whose children have stifled convictions in the dance, by the death-agony of many youths which this amusement has sent apparently unprepared to meet God, by the grief of parents over many whom it has sent to untimely graves, by the lifelong remorse which many will carry to their graves, by the ample testimony of the world, the Church and

word of God against it, I entreat you, touch not the unclean thing. For the sake of your children and friends, for the sake of weak and wandering lovers of pleasure, for the sake of the dear Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, I entreat you, touch not the unclean thing. "Finally, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Phil. iv. 8.

Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1334 Chestnut St., Phila.